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Virginia Clean Energy Innovation Bank Awards $1.5M Grant to George Mason University for Groundbreaking AI Data Center Lab

Research Lab Will Strengthen Clean Energy Innovation and Data Center Workforce Development

RICHMOND, VA – The **Virginia Clean Energy Innovation Bank** (VCEIB), powered by Virginia Energy, has awarded $1.5 million in funding to George Mason University to establish the Virginia Research AI Data Center Lab—a first-of-its-kind research and workforce platform designed to position the Commonwealth as the national leader in grid-integrated, AI-driven digital infrastructure.

The funding will support the acquisition and development of advanced computational and electrical systems at GMU's Arlington campus, creating a cutting-edge facility that bridges the gap between academic research and industry needs.

"Virginia Energy's investment in GMU's Virginia Research AI Data Center Lab underscores our commitment to pairing world-class digital infrastructure with smart, sustainable energy systems," said **Glenn Davis, Director of the Virginia Department of Energy**. "By combining AI, advanced data center technology, and grid-integrated research in an open, university-based platform, this project helps ensure Virginia continues to advance our clean energy and workforce goals."

The Virginia Research AI Data Center Lab will enable real-world experimentation on critical infrastructure challenges, including grid-responsive AI workload management, power quality and harmonics optimization, thermal-electrical interactions, small modular reactor and renewable energy integration, and data center resilience and energy efficiency.

"This award reflects a strategic step toward giving Virginia the tools it needs to manage rapidly growing data center demand in a way that is resilient and efficient," said **Julianne Szyper, Deputy Director of the Virginia Department of Energy**. "The lab at GMU will provide a testbed where industry, educators, and policymakers can work together on real

systems, building the specialized workforce and solutions that will keep Virginia competitive for decades to come."

The facility will generate Virginia's first publicly available open-source dataset capturing real data center electrical and thermal telemetry—data that is not commercially available—enabling statewide research and innovation that will benefit universities, utilities, and industry partners.

As AI workloads surge, Virginia utilities face unprecedented interconnection requests and a shortage of engineers and technicians skilled in AI computation, power systems, cooling, and clean energy integration. This lab tackles this gap through hands-on training, K–12 and community college programs, industry-led workforce development and certification, internship and apprenticeship pipelines, and joint research and development with utilities, data centers, and leading institutions.

"We are honored to receive this support from the Virginia Clean Energy Innovation Bank and Virginia Energy to launch the Virginia Research AI Data Center Lab at our Mason Square campus in Arlington," said **Ken Ball, Dean of GMU's College of Engineering and Computing**. "This lab, directed by Professor Liling Huang, will give our students, faculty, and partners access to state-of-the-art AI and data center infrastructure, enabling cutting-edge research, hands-on training, and open data resources that will position GMU—and Virginia—as global leaders in digital infrastructure and energy innovation."

About the Virginia Clean Energy Innovation Bank
Through support for innovative initiatives like these, the VCEIB accelerates the deployment of clean power generation and energy infrastructure across the Commonwealth with loans and other financing options. By mobilizing public and private capital to address critical financing gaps in these sectors, the VCEIB supports the goals outlined in Virginia's All-American, All-of-the-Above Energy Plan. Information about additional funding opportunities through the VCEIB is **available online**.

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